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Cari Beauchamp. *Without Lying Down: Frances Marion and the Powerful Women of Early Hollywood.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. 475 pp. $21.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-520-21492-7; $30.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-684-80213-8.

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A Boa Constrictor

Without Lying Down is the well-deserved biography of an extraordinarily talented, unique, and powerful woman. She wrote hundreds of screenplays and had a profound impact on the lives of her friends and family. She was a professional woman amongst professional women. She was steadfastly loyal. She was also generous with her influence and power. According to her friend Adela Rogers St. Johns: "Frances Marion had the rugged determination of a boa constrictor where a friend was concerned."

Beauchamp ably tells the story of Frances Marion's professional life. Marion was born in San Francisco in 1888. She moved to Los Angeles with her second husband. Where studio bosses initially noticed her looks instead of her writing. Others noted her beauty as well, but the only thing Marion took seriously was, first and foremost, her writing and, secondarily, attractive men. Over the course of her life, she wrote almost 200 produced films. During World War I, she was selected to film *American Women in the War in France*. She won two Academy Awards for writing *The Big House* (1930) and *The Champ* (1931) In 1933, Marion was elected as the first vice-president of the newly-formed Screen Writers' Guild.

Without Lying Down is an excellent treatment of this amazing woman's life story. Author Cari Beauchamp relies on Marion's published and unpublished autobiographies. She has done an immense job of locating newspaper clippings, combing through Frances Marion's personal collection at University of Southern California, her many stories and screenplays, as well as countless interviews with her contemporaries and family members.

The title comes from a pithy comment made by Marion: "I spent my life searching for a man to look up to without lying down." Marion searched indeed. She married four men in her lifetime. Her third husband, Fred Thomson, was her one true love. Thomson was a famous cowboy actor who died suddenly and tragically in Marion's arms. Her other husbands were emotionally challenged by her fame and sought comfort in other women and alcohol.

Without Lying Down captures the importance of female friendship in Frances Marion's life. Marion certainly rubbed elbows with famous men: L.B. Mayer, Irving Thalberg, Douglas Fairbanks, Cecil B. De Mille, and William Randolph Hearst, just to name a few. Yet, more importantly, Frances Marion was friends with the most famous and powerful women of early Hollywood. Just some of her close friends were Lois Weber, Jeanie Macpherson, Anita Loos, Dorothy Parker, Bess Meredyth, Caroline Bishop, Lorna Moon, Hedda Hopper, Lillian Gish, and Norma Talmadge. She often held parties on Friday nights just for her women friends. At the parties, they dressed down, laughed, gossiped, and made powerful connections in an all-female forum.

Her dearest and most long-term friend was Mary Pickford. They worked together closely but never more closely than when they were in their twenties. They lived together, set each other's hair each night, arrived on the set at seven a.m., returning home well into the night. They constantly looked to one another for support and guidance. Frances was the woman chosen by Mary to create and publish her advice column. Frances also wrote many of Mary's screenplays, including *The Poor Little Rich Girl*, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, *The Little Princess*, *Stella Maris*, and *Amarilly of Clothesline Alley*. They even took their honeymoons together when Marion married Thomson and Pickford married Douglas. As the years went by, the two remained friends through changes of all kinds. In the end, they were friends for over fifty years.

Marion was friends with other important women as well. Actress Marie Dressler saved her from ruin when she was working as a reporter for *Hearst* in San Fran-

cisco. Although Dressler and Hearst were momentarily at odds, Dressler gave her an unforgettable interview. They remained friends for the rest of their lives. In 1926, Dressler retired from the stage. Marion discovered that her life was in absolute ruins and wrote a screenplay just for her (*The Callahans and the Murphys*). She took the script to Thalberg, and essentially begged him to hire Dressler. As a result of Marion's careful work, Dressler was hired on an excellent weekly salary. Dressler received an Academy Award in 1930-31 for *Min and Bill*, and she gave the glory to Frances for the well-written story. When Marion's husband, Fred, was hospitalized on Christmas Day, Marion called Dressler. Dressler promptly went to their home, Enchanted Hill, to play Mrs. Santa Claus for their sons.

For almost thirty years, Marion was the highest-paid screenwriter in early Hollywood. Her life story demonstrates the continuity of female friendship in the twentieth-century. She and her friends made compromises and experienced hostility, but they promoted one another without fail. Beauchamp's biography demonstrates that the films Marion and others made are a testament to the brief moment in film history in which women were not quite second-class citizens.

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